

VZCZCXRO3713
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #2254/01 3451407
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 111407Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7749
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002254

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/CT: (RShore)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: 2009 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 109980

¶1. (U) In 2009, the Government of Nigeria continued efforts to improve coordination, communication and cooperation between the executive and legislative branches on counterterrorism (CT) matters. However, progress on CT legislation in the National Assembly slowed due to reconciliation and consolidation issues between two rival terrorism bills and general legislative lethargy. The National Focal Point on Terrorism, an interagency task force formed in February 2007 comprised of the State Security Service (SSS), the Nigerian Customs Service, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Immigration, and other relevant authorities, has been on an extended hiatus since the transfer of its SSS and MFA coordinators.

¶2. (U) On March 9, the Islamic organization Jama'at Izalatul Bidi'Wa Iqamatus Sunnah, otherwise known as Izala, publicly warned of plans by unidentified groups to mount attacks in Plateau, Kaduna, Taraba, Adamawa, Gombe, and Bauchi states. In a statement, the group encouraged the government to take concrete steps to address the threat and prevent the "implementation of the evil plans in states earmarked for the act."

¶3. (U) Subsequently, on July 26 around 70 Islamic militants from a group calling itself "Boko Haram", Hausa for "education is sin," and which some refer to as the "Nigerian Taliban," attacked an Izala mosque and police station in the Dutsen Tanshi section of Bauchi town with firearms and hand grenades. (Note: the sinful or forbidden "education" is commonly understood to mean "western" education.) The attacks resulted in at least 55 deaths and up to 200 arrests. The following day, Boko Haram carried out near-simultaneous attacks against police headquarters in Maiduguri, Borno State, and police stations in Potsikum, Yobe State, and Wudil, Kano State, provoking police and military sweeps in several states thought to harbor Boko Haram members and sympathizers. Running clashes between security forces and militants reportedly resulted in around 700 deaths, including innocent bystanders. The situation is reminiscent of the largely rural, anti-establishment, and radical movement known as Maitatsine which caused riots in Kano State from December 18-29, 1980, in which 4,177 people reportedly died.

¶4. (U) The Nigerian military captured Maiduguri-based Boko Haram spiritual leader Mohammed Yusuf alive after a siege of his compound, and turned him over to Maiduguri police, whose colleagues the group had killed. A local policeman summarily executed Yusuf in front of the station in full view of onlookers, after parading him before television cameras. We have not confirmed reports that some of the militants came from neighboring Chad and Niger. More likely is that they were from wide-ranging ethnic groups common to areas in Chad, Niger and Nigeria who settled in Nigeria, often generations back. In response, on August 17 Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) issued a "Statement of Consolation, Advice, and Condolences to our

Brothers and family in Nigeria."

15. (U) Twenty-three year-old militant Abdul Rasheed, a native of Adamawa State, who was arrested in its capital Yola claimed to have received explosives training outside Nigeria paid for by Yusuf. In fact, it was an explosion in a private residence in Maiduguri where bombmakers were said to be preparing explosives for attacks which alerted authorities to the threat and presumably expedited the attack in Bauchi on July 26.

16. (U) Legislators merged a "private member" Senate bill based on the Commonwealth Secretariat's Model Legislative Provisions on Measures to Combat Terrorism, which passed its second reading on September 17, 2008, with an executive bill sponsored by the presidency. The hybrid legislation, which resembles more the later executive bill, currently awaits a third and final reading in the Senate, before the President may sign it into law. In an October 12, 2009 letter, Nigerian President Yar'Adua asked the National Assembly to pass the legislation to combat terrorism and kidnapping. The bill stipulates a maximum jail term of only five years for those convicted of terrorism.

17. (U) The Nigerian government continued to operate USG-funded body scanners in all four international airports to detect explosives and drugs on passengers, with numerous successful interdictions of contraband, mainly drugs. Despite repeated USG requests since 2007, the Nigerian government has yet to sign a memorandum of understanding sanctioning the use of U.S. (and Nigerian) Federal Air Marshals on direct flights between Nigeria and the U.S. A Transportation Security Administration (TSA) MANPADS assessment team

ABUJA 00002254 002 OF 002

visited Nigeria from July 13-17 in conjunction with Delta Airlines' commencement of service from Abuja to New York. Nigeria's application for Category One status from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration is expected to be approved sometime in mid-2010. Nevertheless, Nigerian carrier Arik Air started flying to the U.S. on December 1 using "wet-leased" aircraft from Ghana, a Category One country.

18. (U) The Nigerian government welcomes and actively participates in USG-sponsored training and capacity building programs, particularly in the areas of CT and border security. Progress continues on establishment of an additional Regional Maritime Awareness Capability (RMAC) radar station on the eastern coast to complement one already operational in Lagos. The U.S. military is assisting the GON with standing up a specialized CT unit within the Nigerian military. Mission Nigeria's Office of Security Cooperation (OSC) conducted three Trans-Sahara Security Symposia in support of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), addressing human development issues that may contribute to the spread of extremism and instability. In addition, OSC sponsored the attendance of nine participants from various agencies at the Trans-Sahara Security Symposium at the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Center in Accra, Ghana from December 14-18.

19. (U) During 2009, Diplomatic Security sponsored Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) courses on: Terrorism Crime Scene Investigation, Airport Security Management, VIP Protection, VIP Protection Management, Fraudulent Documents, and Maritime Interdiction of Terrorism for 91 Nigerian law enforcement and security officials and practitioners. The U.S. Mission to Nigeria continuously looks for ways to provide additional CT training and assistance.

110. (U) Nigeria is not considered to be a safe haven for terrorists, given the government's posture and approach to extremists, nor a major source of terrorist funding. However, socioeconomic disparities, lack of transparency, and poverty, particularly in the predominantly Muslim north, breed popular discontent among a population which Al-Qaeda has expressed interest in exploiting.

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¶12. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.

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